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The situation in the Middle East

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Identical letters dated 21 January 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I wish to draw your attention to the latest violation of the Blue Line from Lebanese territory which serves as a grave threat to peace and stability in the area.

On Monday 19 January 2004, at approximately 4.40 p.m. (local time), Hizbullah terrorists perpetrated a fatal anti-tank missile strike from the Lebanese side of the Blue Line on an Israeli vehicle while it was operating to neutralize a roadside cluster of explosive charges planted by Hizbullah south of the Blue Line in Israeli territory. Sergeant Major Jan Rotzanski, 21, of Herzliya was killed and a second soldier was seriously wounded when the vehicle, an engineering unit used to disarm explosive charges, was hit in the western sector of the Israel-Lebanon border near Moshav Zarit. The entire incident was observed by a United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) observation post and immediately following the incident the UNIFIL commander met with an Israeli liaison officer and confirmed that the attack constituted a grave breach of the Blue Line by Hizbullah.

This is the most recent in a series of clusters planted by Hizbullah on the Israeli side of the Blue Line. This reprehensible tactic designed to target Israeli security personnel charged with patrolling the Blue Line and protecting Israeli residents in the North from terrorist infiltrations and attacks constitutes a blatant violation of international law and Security Council resolutions.

Monday's attempt to dismantle the cluster in the western sector of the Blue Line was preceded by extensive communications between the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and UNIFIL. At the time the cluster was first located, on 4 January 2004, the IDF notified UNIFIL, as it had in the past, and UNIFIL inspectors joined IDF patrols to confirm the existence of the cluster although UNIFIL did not take steps to disarm it. In turn, the IDF informed UNIFIL that it intended to take defensive actions to neutralize the cluster, which threatened to endanger civilian life and security personnel in the area. Hizbullah's attack on the vehicle constitutes yet

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another unprovoked and illegal terrorist act directed at personnel involved in an entirely defensive operation.

Since Israel's complete withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000, in full and confirmed compliance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978), Hizbullah attacks have aimed to terrorize civilian populations in northern Israel and provoke an escalation of hostilities along the Blue Line. Since Israel's withdrawal, Hizbollah terrorists have killed 16 Israeli citizens and wounded over 60 others in over 170 separate incidents involving terrorist infiltrations, Katyusha rockets, mortar shells, anti-tank missiles and small arms fire.

Rather than acting to fulfil its international obligations, the Government of Lebanon has effectively relinquished control of South Lebanon to Hizbullah, a terrorist organization with a global network of operatives that has supported and perpetrated countless terrorist actions, both in the Middle East and beyond. The recent incidents testify, yet again, to the fact that were Lebanon to simply meet the obligations required of all States to prevent their territory from serving as a base for terrorist attacks, tensions in the area would be immeasurably defused and Israeli measures of self-defence would be unnecessary.

Hizbullah attacks are further enabled by the direct funding and complicity of the Syrian and Iranian Governments, which are dually responsible for the escalation of violence on Israel's border with Lebanon and for the continuing instability in the area.

In the light of the impending renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, and the preparation of the upcoming report of the Secretary-General on UNIFIL, it is incumbent upon the international community and the United Nations to expressly condemn this latest Hizbullah attack and make it clear to Lebanon that it will not tolerate continued support for illegal terrorist attacks. The international community must demand nothing less than for Lebanon to live up to its obligations under international law and Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 425 (1978), 426 (1978), 1310 (2000), 1337 (2001) and 1373 (2001), so as to restore peace and security in the area and to assume effective control over its territory and to prevent acts of terrorism like any responsible State.

How many more casualties will Hizbullah terrorism, Lebanese intransigence and Syrian and Iranian sponsorship have to exact before Lebanese compliance with Security Council resolutions and international law will be assured without compromise?

This letter is a follow-up to previous letters concerning the dangerous situation in South Lebanon caused by the illegal attacks perpetrated by Hizbollah across the Blue Line.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter circulated as a document of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, under agenda items 156 and 37, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Dan **Gillerman**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative